



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

MAUI MAN SENTENCED FOR MONEY LAUNDERING AND TAX FRAUD IN MASSIVE MARIJUANA SMUGGLING SCHEME

\$1 million in cash assets forfeited to U.S.

HONOLULU – A Maui man who ran an elaborate multi-million dollar marijuana smuggling scheme was sentenced yesterday to two years in prison for money laundering and filing false income tax returns. In addition, Michael Keith Ritter, 56, forfeited \$1 million in cash proceeds from his illegal ventures.

Ritter's sentencing yesterday follows an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Internal Revenue Service that revealed he was responsible for importing massive loads of marijuana from Thailand into the United States from the late 1970s through the mid-1980s.

Ritter pleaded guilty last year to money laundering, criminal forfeiture, fraud, and making false statements in connection with those activities. Although the drug offenses occurred many years ago, Ritter continued to actively manage his foreign offshore trust fund accounts.

"ICE will continue working with our law enforcement partners to disrupt the trafficking of narcotics and dismantle the criminal enterprises responsible for this activity," said Hawaii ICE special agent-in-charge Wayne Wills.

Court documents reveal that Ritter participated in at least a dozen ventures using boats to smuggle multi-ton loads of Thai marijuana to the West Coast -- including a 1986 three-ton shipment which grossed more than \$5 million. Ritter concealed these funds in foreign offshore trust fund accounts in Hong Kong and in the Isle of Man, filed U.S. tax returns without reporting all income, and failed to file reports of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts for the foreign offshore trust funds he owned and controlled.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.